

Depot Medroxyprogesterone Acetate (Depo Provera®)

This sheet is about exposure to depot medroxyprogesterone acetate in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

What is depot medroxyprogesterone acetate?

Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate is the injectable (given by shot) form of a lab-made hormone called medroxyprogesterone acetate. This medication is similar to the hormone progesterone. More information on progesterone can be found in our fact sheet: <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/progesterone/>. Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate is sold under the brand name Depo Provera®.

The depot medroxyprogesterone acetate shot is used to prevent pregnancy (as birth control). The shot works for approximately 90 days but the medication may be found in the bloodstream longer. It has been recommended that females receive a shot every 90 days to prevent pregnancy. Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate is not the same as oral birth control pills (pills taken by mouth), which contain other hormones.

Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate can also be used to treat some problems linked to a person's period (menstrual disorders) and, at high doses, can be used to treat certain types of cancer. This fact sheet will cover the use of the depot medroxyprogesterone acetate shot for birth control.

I am taking depot medroxyprogesterone acetate, but I would like to stop taking it before getting pregnant. How long does the drug stay in my body?

People eliminate medication at different rates. In healthy adults, it takes 120 to 200 days for most of the depot medroxyprogesterone acetate to be gone from the body.

I take depot medroxyprogesterone acetate. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?

Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate is a form of birth control, and is expected to lower the chance of getting pregnant.

Does taking depot medroxyprogesterone acetate increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Based on the studies reviewed, use of depot medroxyprogesterone acetate is not expected to increase the chance of miscarriage.

Does taking depot medroxyprogesterone acetate increase the chance of birth defects?

Every pregnancy starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background risk. The majority of studies have not found a higher chance of birth defects with exposure to depot medroxyprogesterone acetate.

Does taking depot medroxyprogesterone acetate increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?

Studies have not been done to see if depot medroxyprogesterone acetate increases the chance for pregnancy-related problems such as preterm delivery (birth before week 37) or low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth).

Does taking depot medroxyprogesterone acetate affect future behavior or learning for the child?

Limited studies have not shown long term health problems from exposure to depot medroxyprogesterone acetate during pregnancy.

Breastfeeding while taking depot medroxyprogesterone acetate:

Depot medroxyprogesterone acetate passes into breast milk in small amounts. The amounts of hormone found in breast milk are small. Based on the studies reviewed, depot medroxyprogesterone acetate is not expected to negatively affect

a child's long-term growth and development. Some sources, such as the World Health Organization and the product label, have recommend waiting 6 weeks after the baby's birth before starting this medication. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

If a male takes depot medroxyprogesterone acetate, could it affect fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects?

There have been a few studies done where males were given depot medroxyprogesterone acetate and another medication to prevent spermatogenesis (the process of the body making sperm), which would make it harder to conceive a pregnancy. Studies have not been done to see if depot medroxyprogesterone acetate could increase the chance of birth defects above the background risk. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are unlikely to increase the risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/>.

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